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NATION BUILDING:
THE ARMY AVIATION CONTRIBUTION

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL RONALD D. THOMAS
United States Army

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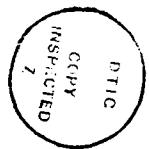
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NATION BUILDING: The Army Aviation Contribution

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Project Advisor

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ABSTRACT

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The national security strategy involves an expanded national defense mission that includes peacetime operations to improve and promote stability in foreign countries. The cornerstone document of US Army doctrine is Airland Battle-Future (ALBF). Nation assistance is defined in ALBF as the mission of assisting a Host Nation (HN) in its efforts to restructure, reinforce, or rebuild its formal and informal institutions. Nation building operations contribute to stability in foreign countries thereby enhancing US national security. This paper will discuss the contribution that Army aviation can make to nation assistance operations, provide principles for integrating army aviation into emerging ALBF nation assistance doctrine, and propose recommendations that when implemented can assist host nation governments in the development of their internal army aviation organizations.

The discussion in this paper will focus on the need for US nation assistance forces to assist host nation countries in Central America to develop internal aviation organizations that can be used in dual roles to support nation building initiatives. The intent of the paper is to suggest that US Army aviation should perform nation assistance operations in concert with other US military forces and in participation with the forces of the host nation.

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INTRODUCTION

Nation assistance is not a visionary topic, but a philosophy of action that can be used to promote U.S. national interests by supporting developing nations in their nation building initiatives. The US Army has included nation assistance in its Airland Battle Future doctrine and has defined it as the mission of providing assistance to another cooperative nation in its efforts to restructure, reinforce, or rebuild its formal and informal infrastructures to provide for its people. Included are institution building assistance, disaster relief, economic development assistance and security assistance.¹ The incorporation of nation assistance into Army Doctrine falls in line with the Department of Defense's (DOD) expanded national defense mission that includes peacetime operations to improve and promote stability in foreign countries. Expanding and formalizing the DOD role in peacetime operations is a further indicator of the changes that are taking place in our national strategy. US Army aviation can assist our nation with these changes.

The region that presents the greatest potential for nation assistance programs is Central America. El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua have long been plagued with poor economic development, increasing national debt, lack of formal public institutions and poverty. The continual threat of insurgent forces in some Central American countries, contributes to an

environment that breeds unrest and promotes a lack of confidence in the existing government. This environment is ripe for the emergence of U.S. nation assistance efforts and the use of nation assistance forces.

The primary goal of US forces conducting nation assistance operations is to assist the host nation in developing its ability to provide for the needs of its society, and to build stability through orderly, responsive change.² US forces can be utilized to assess the developing nations needs by providing host nation and regional intelligence information which generates good-will and promotes US democratic ideals through a focused host nation program.

I propose that army aviation be given an active role in the initiatives for Central American host nation assistance programs. Aviation support could facilitate growth and allow for development in Central American countries. This paper addresses the benefits of a comprehensive nation assistance program, historical perspectives, principles for the successful integration of army aviation and recommendations for the army aviation contribution to nation assistance programs.

On April 2, 1991 General Colin L. Powell (USA), Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that he saw no threat looming in the next five years that could require an immediate and immense deployment like that one leading to Operation Desert Storm. "Think hard about it. I'm running out of demons. I'm running out of villains, I'm down to Fidel Castro and Kim Il Sung".³

General Powell's statement reflects the dramatic changes that are occurring in the world today. US national strategy has focused on containing communism for the past forty years. With the Soviet Union turning its attention inward to rebuild its shattered economy, the time for the United States to revitalize nation building initiatives is now.

The opportunities for increased national security through nation assistance programs seem endless and provide challenges to all branches of service. The aviation community, and Army aviation specifically, can provide, through integration into nation assistance operations, an added dimension to the internal development of supported nations.

BACKGROUND

Throughout history military forces have been used primarily to provide both internal and external security for their countries. However, in many countries, the use of military forces to benefit the community and the nation is an integral part of attaining national security. In some areas of the world, military personnel possess skills in engineering, medicine, communications, transportation and procurement that are in short supply in the civilian populace. In recent years it has become policy in the United States to encourage and support the military

in the nations of Central America to develop programs that would utilize their military resources for non-military or nation building programs.

Nation Building: Central American Perspective

In 1983, Dr. Henry Kissinger, who had been National Security Adviser and Secretary of State during the 1970's, led a Presidential Commission to examine the US Foreign Aid program and efforts being made by the US in Central America. The bipartisan group of distinguished Americans recommended to President Reagan and the Congress that the US should undertake a new program of economic and security assistance aimed at ensuring the survival of democracy in South America by stating:

"The 1980's must be the decade in which the United States recognizes that its relationships with Mexico and Central and South America rank in importance with its ties to Europe and Asia... three principles should guide hemispheric relations:

1) Democratic self-determination

2) Encouragement of economic and social development

3) Cooperation in meeting threats to the security of the region. Just as there can be no real security without economic growth and social justice, so there can be no propriety without security."⁴

The recognized US interests in Central America are numerous. President Bush has stated these interests in the National Security Strategy of the United States. These interests include:

1) A stable and secure world, free of major threats to US interests. The US has long considered that its own security is inextricably linked to the hemisphere's collective security, social peace and economic progress.⁵

2) The growth of human freedom, democratic institutions, and free market economies throughout the hemisphere, linked by a fair and open international trading system. The US goal in Nicaragua is to assist the new government in its efforts to nurture democratic institutions, rebuild the economy and scale back the Nicaraguan military. The goal in El Salvador is to support that government's military and political efforts to defeat the communist insurgency.⁶

3) The development of healthy and vigorous alliance relationships. Currently, with Canada joining the Organization of American States (OAS), we see renewed interest in this alliance. Additionally, President Bush's Economic Americas Initiative has shown renewed US political and economic interest in the region.

Over the past decade, US policy toward Latin America has evolved from a singular emphasis on human rights to the four "Ds"--democracy, development, defense and dialogue.⁷ Obviously, nation building programs that incorporate principles of democracy

provide for a nation's development, support the country's defense, allow for free dialogue between nations and further substantiates the legitimacy of a government. Civil-military interaction can provide a foundation for accomplishment of these goals and can be tied directly into nation assistance programs.

US Security Assistance Programs and nation assistance forces, directly linked to nation building initiatives in developing countries, can aid in obtaining goals and supporting these principles. The primary focus of security assistance and nation assistance must be toward nation building initiatives that promote stability in the region while providing developmental assistance.

Obviously, attempts by the US at nation building have produced a variety of results. The complexity of the budget process, foreign policy definitions, cooperation of second and third rate military powers and governments complicate efforts. Nation building should be a response to the needs of both development and defense. In Central America, the likelihood of war that poses a threat to US security is low; however, the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala continue to fight insurgents and engage in border disputes. Armies are still substantial in Central America where over 330,000 men are under arms. Military hardware consists of naval patrol vessels, attack and transport aircraft, armor, attack and transport helicopters. Keeping pace with the demands for arms expenses are the growing

demands by the populace for better living conditions. Not surprisingly, therefore, many governments are evaluating the possibility of arms reductions and armed forces reductions. How the United States addresses these issues will have great impact on the constantly changing world environment.

NATION ASSISTANCE

The needs for nation assistance in Central America vary from country to country based upon their level of development, desire for positive change, and the legitimacy of the government. Based upon these factors and the impact of fluctuating economic, political, and military factors, it is impossible to develop a singular standard nation assistance approach. Essential to developing an appropriate nation building approach is the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in each country. The members of this team and the Country Development Team (CDT), headed by the Ambassador, work in close coordination and cooperation with the host nation government to develop an effective approach to nation building. Two additional important participants in this process are the Commanders-in-Chief (CINC) of US Southern Command and US Special Operations Command. The MAAG and CDT are responsible for developing an approach that promotes host nation development and supports US foreign policy. The two CINCs participate in the planning process and provide

support through nation assistance forces and by closely monitoring the security assistance process.

Nation Assistance Forces

The US Army contributes to achieving the national objectives of regional stability and developmental assistance by using its nation assistance forces. Nation Assistance Forces are individuals/teams/sections/units/task forces which possess skills suited to assist a host nation.⁸ These forces, when introduced, provide a means of promoting and protecting US interests, within the host nation. The primary goal of US forces conducting nation assistance operations is to assist a host nation in developing its ability to provide for the needs of its society, and to build stability through orderly, responsive change.⁹ The systematic application of these forces provide, to the host nation, a means of reducing internal unrest by indirectly benefiting the public through host governmental development.

Aviation Support

Countries in Central America, specifically El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua are developing army aviation

organizations and incorporating them as a part of their nation building programs. These nation building programs encompass the military operational continuum. Army aviation organizations, are extremely versatile and are well suited for both civil and military use during peacetime competition, conflict and war. The use of helicopters by these organizations have proven to be invaluable as assets in nation assistance programs and nation building strategy.

As an example, El Salvador is currently in a state of conflict with regard to the operational continuum. The El Salvadoran Air Force has 19 armed and 42 transport helicopters. These helicopters are used to support army combat forces opposing the insurgent actions of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation (FMLN). Unfortunately, for the government of El Salvador, counter-insurgency operations comprise a major portion of their nation building initiatives to achieve government legitimacy.

In addition to these traditional roles, the use of helicopters can be expanded to support nation building initiatives that are non-combat oriented and reside in the peacetime competition end of the operational continuum. These roles and missions may include civic action, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, medical evacuation, geological survey and environmental monitoring.

There are many examples of military helicopter operations which have been used throughout the world to support civilian

authority. In August 1976, flooding of the Big Thompson River in northern Colorado left many people stranded in the flood zone. Helicopters from the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson were tasked to search for people stranded as a result of the flood and to evacuate victims from the flooded area. These helicopters were also available to local government authorities to survey and assess damage caused by the flood. Helicopters from the US 3d Infantry Division have been used to support German civilian authorities and to promote German-American relations. As recent as 1990, helicopters were used to assess damage to forests caused by exceedingly high winds and also to determine flood damage along the Main River. Soviet helicopters were used to emplace cement atop the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl as a means of containing radioactive contamination. US and Vietnamese helicopters were employed to relocate civilians away from conflict areas during the Vietnam War. Helicopters have transported medical teams to remote regions in Nicaragua to provide medical assistance to civilians. Humanitarian assistance and civic action are valid missions that aviation organizations can support. Army aviation organizations can be used in dual roles to support military force structure and to provide a capability to conduct civic action and other nation-building tasks that are ultimately aimed at strengthening public support for the government. In developing democracies, establishing popular support for the government is vital to nation-building.

Army aviation organizations developed by host countries can be used to extend government services to areas where services are not readily available.

INTEGRATING AVIATION INTO NATION BUILDING

The army aviation contribution to nation building can be significant and can provide nation building support to the regional CINCs. Nation building is achieved by employing aviation nation assistance forces that include aviation special operations forces, aviation units assigned to general combat forces, and the formal training base.

Aviation Special Operations Forces

Aviation nation assistance forces must focus their training efforts on the development of host nation aviation organizations that maximize the use of existing capabilities. To meet training assistance needs in Central America, CINC USSOCOM has proposed the development of a Foreign Internal Defense (FID) aviation capability. The unit mission would be to assist the selected developing nation governments with the aviation aspects of their internal security and development programs by providing or supporting training in tactical employment, aviation logistics and aviation mission support. Training for tactical employment

of their aircraft in low intensity conflict would include counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, and nation building/civil assistance roles. The FID unit mission will provide training support in aviation logistics, expedient maintenance and sustainment of aviation organizations. Finally, training provided to the host nation military will also include aviation mission support of air traffic control (ATC), command and control, ground facility planning and training establishment operations.

The intent of the FID aviation capability is to train existing host nation aircrews for tactical applications in internal defense and development. This training would be accomplished using host nation assets to the maximum extent possible.¹⁰ This concept has significant potential especially when it is included as a part of overall US military strategy aimed at achieving regional stability.

This initiative is primarily oriented toward fixed wing and Air Force operations during early development. Army aviation personnel should be included to provide the expertise necessary to work with helicopter organizations. A tailored joint organization will be more capable of addressing the needs of the cooperative nations military forces. The members of the FID aviation capability will accomplish the following four important functions: 1) assist the in-country MAAG to assess infrastructure and training requirements, 2) assess capabilities of the host nation military force and the government's ability to

project that force, 3) assist in development of aviation infrastructure and 4) train host country aviation personnel in tactical employment of aircraft and in missions oriented towards civil application of aircraft.

The success of the FID aviation capability, as proposed, is contingent upon the US providing assistance to the host nation, not leading the nation building initiatives. The appearance, by the US government, of leading nation building initiatives could result in the misinterpretation of US military intent on behalf of the host nation. This misinterpretation might lead to the appearance of US military aggression and interference in host nation programs. This would have an adverse effect on promoting US interests. The host nation's leadership must trust the US and understand its policies and intentions. It is important to US interests to avoid the possible image of the US being the world's policeman. Avoiding these problems presents a challenge to nation assistance planners. US and host nation planners must develop initiatives that are directly linked to the nation building initiatives of the host nation.

Aviation Formal Training Base

Traditionally, US training base facilities have been used to provide training programs to enhance the aviation capabilities of foreign governments. Two such programs are the Latin American (LATAM) Helicopter Training Program at Fort Rucker, Alabama and

the International Air Force Academy (IAFA) operated by the US Air Force at Homestead Air Force Base, Florida. Both programs are technically oriented and focus on training aircrew members with the near term goal of providing manpower capability with a long term goal of providing future leadership to host nation aviation organizations. IAFA's focus is primarily on fixed wing aviation while the Fort Rucker program is solely helicopter related. Regardless of the focus of either program, the intent must be to train aviators. Host nation leadership will need to develop viable internal aviation organizations that will meet the needs of their own nations.

Principles for Integration

The successful integration of army aviation into nation building is dependent on fundamental principles that both the US and the host nation follow. The following principles should be established to insure the successful integration of aviation organizations into nation assistance operations:

- 1) Decisions on use of aviation assets must be made exclusively by the host nation government. Employing aviation organizations is a political decision. How host nation army aviation organizations are used must be the decision of the political leadership of the host nation. The decision to use

aviation organizations in counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, disaster relief, humanitarian assistance or civic action roles is the responsibility of the host nation government. It is the responsibility of in-country nation assistance forces to advise the host nation leadership, to include military leadership, on the best possible use of aviation organizations given the nation building tasks to be accomplished.

2) Tailor nation assistance forces to the host nation needs. Countries in Central America have differing needs based upon economic development, budget constraints, political ideologies and military structure. Based on these external and internal influences, the employment of nation assistance forces must be tailored to support the nation building initiatives established by the host nation.

3) Civil-military operations require detailed plans that must be developed and coordinated. When army aviation organizations are to be used in concert with other host nation governmental agencies, plans should be developed between governmental agencies and the host nation military to insure unity of effort and commitment.

4) **Conduct Joint Training Exercises.** Joint training exercises should be conducted to improve military and civilian agency responses. This training would facilitate a coordinated

and well developed plan for response during emergency and humanitarian assistance operations. US Army aviation nation assistance forces can contribute significantly to the planning process as well as in the execution of joint training exercises.

5) Emphasize the peaceful use of aviation organizations.

Because of their inherent flexibility and responsiveness helicopter organizations can be quickly marshalled to support disaster relief, humanitarian assistance and reconnaissance missions that are not directly oriented to combat operations. While utility in these non-combat roles is readily accepted, the ability to accomplish these missions in some nations is not routinely practiced. Dual use of helicopters can be one of the key elements in nation building because it brings the army in close contact with the government and with the ordinary citizen, thus supporting most nation building fundamentals. Although competing priorities may prevent the use of aviation organizations in non-conflict roles, nation assistance forces should emphasize the dual roles that aircraft can perform in support of nation building initiatives that are not conflict oriented.

6) Promote the development of aviation infrastructure.

Many nation building initiatives undertaken by governments in Central America are hampered by lack of an adequate aviation infrastructure. Specialized aviation equipment such as forward

area refueling equipment (FARE), firefighting, communications and meteorological forecasting equipment can be obtained through US security assistance programs. Introducing such equipment can extend the range of aviation operations and provide for safer mission accomplishment. The FID aviation structure can be tailored to provide training to support the integration of aviation infrastructure equipment.

7) US Foreign aid and security assistance programs must serve to reduce internal unrest by directly benefiting the public and promoting governmental development. The US strategy for security assistance in developing nations must be designed to accomplish two objectives: (1) protect US interests and promote the acceptance of democratic ideals (2) promote regional stability by assisting developing nations, thereby ensuring their own internal stability. These programs must be coordinated with other US stability programs to provide the host nation government the means to develop economically, politically, and militarily.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The capabilities of aviation assistance forces to plan, develop, train and assist Central American countries in establishing aviation organizations is unparalleled. The question is not whether US Army Aviation can be integrated into nation assistance

doctrine, but rather how the Army assists in the development of host nation aviation organizations. To answer this challenge, I propose the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1. The peaceful use of military helicopters must be incorporated into the Army's employment doctrine and training programs for Central America. Host nation government officials need recognize that helicopters belonging to the military can be used in dual roles. Generally, helicopters have been used primarily for counter-insurgency and counter-narcotic operations. While these missions demand major attention, it excludes the use of helicopters in support of internal defense, and ignores peaceful uses which can ultimately add legitimacy to the governments civil military operations.

RECOMMENDATION 2. The in-country team, consisting of the US Military Assistance Advisory Group and the Country Development Team, must coordinate all US stability programs for the host nation. US stability programs include DOD agencies, Department of State (DOS) agencies, US private industry and other US government programs. The in-country team must develop, in partnership with the host nation, a prioritized list of US military equipment to support host nation initiatives. Helicopters, aviation repair parts, aircrew/maintenance training, and aviation infrastructure equipment must be included in the priority list. While the priority listing may not guarantee that

equipment will be forthcoming through the FMS program, it will enable closer coordination between US stability programs.

RECOMMENDATION 3. The MAAG must assist the host nation in establishing an aviation fielding concept that fully integrates aviation logistics. There is a lack of sufficient infrastructure to support existing helicopter operations. This includes shortages of replacement parts and maintenance facilities. The problem of replacement parts shortages is often compounded because some governments have purchased helicopters from many different manufacturers. An integrated fielding concept will streamline host nation purchasing programs with long term support by manufacturers. Additionally, placing emphasis on the dual uses of helicopters will assist in justifying host nation funding and requests for security assistance.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The U.S. must continue the training conducted by the School of the Americas, the LATAM Helicopter Training Program and the International Air Force Academy (IAFA). The lack of trained aircrews and maintenance and support personnel will hamper the use of helicopters in any military or civil mission requirement. The establishment of helicopter initial qualification training schools are expensive and beyond the financial capability of many Central American countries.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The MAAG must accurately identify aviation peculiar equipment such as the Forward Area Refueling Equipment (FARE) system and air traffic control (ATC) equipment that are required by the host nation to develop aviation infrastructure. The lack of aviation peculiar equipment and infrastructure limits the range at which helicopters can operate. Many Latin American countries have poorly developed transportation infrastructure. As examples, Honduras has 2,550 kilometers of roads, of which 1,674 kilometers or 24% are paved. In Nicaragua, less than 1% are paved. Helicopters can readily support civic action programs and extend government presence in remote regions. However, without remote bases that possess some maintenance capability and fuel, helicopter operations can be restricted to base or flight endurance operations. The FARE system can be made available through the US foreign military sales program to extend helicopter operations into remote regions.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Army aviation qualified officers should be assigned to military advisory groups in Central America. Having US Army aviation qualified officers assigned to the military advisory groups on a permanent basis can be instrumental in the integration of helicopter support into governmental nation-building initiatives. An army aviation officer will be able to accomplish the following:

- 1) Provide guidance on the dual role use of helicopters to host nation aviation leadership.
- 2) Assess host nation requirements and design security assistance packages to meet those needs over the long term.
- 3) Assess the training needs of aviation personnel to include aviation leadership, aircrew members, and maintenance personnel.
- 4) Assess aviation peculiar infrastructure requirements such as forward area refueling equipment and ground support equipment.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and the US Army Aviation Center and School (USAAVNCS) must work with IAFA to identify and resolve any duplication of training and planning efforts. In times of dwindling budgets and force structure reductions, can the DOD afford to fund duplicative training efforts in IAFA and the LATAM Helicopter Training Program? Currently, IAFA conducts helicopter training courses for Latin American Students while similar courses are taught at Fort Rucker or Fort Eustis. A central plan focusing on the development of a well defined, all encompassing joint aviation training program must be identified.

CONCLUSION

Nation building is not a new concept. It includes the peaceful use of military force to benefit the community and the nation, and is an integral part of achieving national security. US support of nation building programs in Central America assists in promoting democratic governments and stability in the western hemisphere. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the United States to encourage developing democracies to utilize their military resources to meet strategic goals as well as to provide education, medical, engineering and humanitarian assistance to their people.

In discussing the background and principles, it should be clear that a consistent approach is necessary to any nation building program. Furthermore, these principles must be applied to the development of nation building programs for each Central American country. Because stable and economically sound Central American democratic governments are the desired ends, the US must use its foreign aid and security assistance programs as the ways and programs such as mobile training teams, nation assistance forces and foreign military sales as the means to accomplish the desired end state.

The challenges to army aviation's contributions to nation building are not all inclusive, others will emerge. Education and training of host nation leadership and the development of sound aviation organizations is key to resolving the issues that confront the US Army aviation community. Aviation planners must

promote the use of helicopters in non-traditional roles that support host nation initiatives in internal development and stability operations.

Finally, provided in this paper is a basis for additional study and research in incorporating army aviation's contribution to operations short of conflict which are a vital and integral part of nation building. Now is the time to incorporate the inherent dual roles and mission capabilities of Army aviation into nation assistance doctrine. The United States will benefit from this doctrine as will the Army aviation community. More importantly, developing nations will benefit from the result of such doctrine and the programs developed to support it.

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